

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

Luke 5:1-11

What does obedience to God mean? How do we treat our relationship with God on a daily basis? What is it that we want out of life? What is most important to us? What is your life centered on?

These are very basic but deep and thought provoking questions. When was the last time you stopped and thought about just one of these questions. I think it is important for us to evaluate our lives from time to time and make a “progress check” concerning our goals and desires in this life. Think about each one of these questions and consider carefully your answer as we begin to speak about obedience to God. Life is full of paved roads and also bumpy roads. Which road we travel in this life has a great deal to do with our obedience to God. Obedience to God is not just a Sunday ritual or something we strive to do in times of despair, but it is a way of life. If we don't set our minds and hearts in obedience to God we are setting ourselves up for discontentment, sorrow, failure, defeat, heartaches, and much more.

Obedience to God is doing what God says to do, when God says to do it, and how God says to do it. It seems like such a simple concept, but how easy is it for the cares of this world to snuff out our fellowship with God! It is also a fact that **God always rewards obedience to him**. In the bible rewards are spoken of for the child of God in this life. There are no rewards in heaven, for heaven is by the grace of God. But in this life God rewards those who are obedient to him. Deut. 28 speaks of blessings for those who hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord, to observe and do all his commandments. It also speaks of curses to those who will not hearken nor observe to do all his commandments and his statutes. Isaiah 1:19-20 says, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it”.

In Samuel 15 we read of Saul's disobedience to God. He was to destroy all of Amalek and take nothing. When Samuel came to him he could hear the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen that was taken, along with King Agag. Saul's excuse was that he was planning to use those animals as sacrifices unto God. In the verse 22 Samuel said, “*Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*”. As a result of Saul's disobedience God had rejected him from being King over Israel. Have you ever wondered how many blessings you have missed out on because of your lack of obedience to God? I do not think I would like it if God were to say to me, “lets look at your past and see how I could have blessed you if you had not done this, but rather done such and such”! But we will not be successful in our obedience if all we do is look at our past errors and see where we have gone astray or where we would have changed things. We must be willing and ready to move ahead in our service to God. The blessings are still there for us.

Obedience is not a gift that we are born with it is a learning experience. A child learns obedience by his parents. And as he learns to obey, he learns that there are rewards to follow. It is often the case today that children are not taught properly how to obey, and as a result they have no respect for others and have more problems with life issues. There are those that might ask, "How are we to obey God when we can't hear him"? This is a good question. Certainly in God's word we read where God spoke directly to individuals and we know that God does not speak to us now in an audible voice. But God does speak to us in his word. 2Timothy 3:16-16 states, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished unto all good works***". God's word furnishes us with what we need to maintain good works before God. He speaks to us through His word.

It is with these thoughts of obedience that I would like to look at Luke 5:1-11 which states, "*And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.*"

In these verses we have 3 examples of Peter's obedience to Christ.

1) In verse 3 Christ enters onto Peter's boat and prays him to thrust out a little. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

This first act of obedience may not seem like much at first but it brings Peter into the blessings of God. No doubt Peter was tired from fishing all night and also a little down because they had caught nothing. When Christ came by they were washing their nets by casting them into the sea to clean them. It would have been so easy for Peter to say, "I am tired and have caught nothing, why don't you use one of these other ships?" As we continue on in this paper consider what Peter would have missed out on if he had declined to do Christ's will. It was a small favor. When God teaches us how to obey, as a father does with his child, he starts off small. But my, how those small acts of obedience can lead right into the blessings of God!

What was the blessing that Peter gained by this act? His boat became Christ's pulpit as he preached to those on the shore. Not only that but Peter was also sitting right there with him in the boat as he was preaching! What a blessing that would be to sit next to Christ as he preached the gospel out of your boat to the people on the shore! No obedience to God is too small. It may be that those small acts of obedience will lead to greater blessings. This certainly was the case with Peter.

2) The next step in Peter's obedience is found in verse 3. Christ said unto Simon, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught".

This may perhaps have seemed like a fruitless command of Christ. Peter had already been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Peter could have easily said, "I am tired and really need to get home to rest, I know how to fish and I have been here all night and I am telling you there are no fish here". But Peter had already been blessed to hear Christ's sermon and had begun to look up to Christ, even though at this current time he may not have known just who Christ was. He was obedient to Christ and launched out into the deep and let down his net. Peter's faith in Christ had begun to be exercised.

Being obedient to God is not always doing what we want to do or what we would like to do it is doing what God would have us to do. It is when we read God's word or are convicted by the gospel and we are moved and motivated to say, "I want to walk in obedience to God". Then it goes beyond just saying it, but doing it. James 1:25 says, *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed"*. The devil and our sinful nature are always there to encourage us to walk in disobedience to God. But James said to submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7). Satan's goals are to get our minds off of God and on the things of the world. So many people in this county are in bondage to debt and owe their whole paycheck to someone else just so they can have things that they can't afford. Debt ruins countless marriages and is the cause of so much stress and anxiety in this country. The Apostle Paul said in Hebrews 13:5, *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*

What was Peter's reward for obeying Christ? It was the biggest catch he had ever had in his life! There were so many fish that it began to break the net and he had to get another ship to come over and help. This great blessing would serve to increase his faith in Christ. Now he could see clearly who Christ was, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

3) The third example of Peter's obedience was when Christ said, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. This was said in Matthew 4:19. John 10:11 says, "*And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.*"

What a great act of obedience this was! Peter would now have to leave his livelihood and all that he knew behind. Now God had brought him to a larger act of obedience, but it would be met with larger blessings. Peter had been brought to the place that he was ready to sell out to the Lord. His selling out was not with any promises of blessings. Christ had promised him nothing, but had simply said, "Follow me".

Have you yet reached the point that you are ready to sell out and leave all behind for the Lord? To put Him first in all that we do, to seek His favor and will and to walk humbly in obedience to Him is selling out to Christ. To say, "I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest" is selling out. And it too is met with blessings from God. In Mark 10:28-30 it says, "*Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*"

Consider what all Peter was blessed with by following Christ. He walked with Christ in close fellowship while on this earth. The Apostle Peter was on the mount of transfiguration and saw Christ in his glory. It was Peter who Christ had blessed to preach on the day of Pentecost. All these blessings and more were given to Peter simply because he was obedient to Christ. Again I ask the question as before: What if Peter had not obeyed Christ in letting him preach out of his boat? It was that small act of obedience that set in motion all the blessings that Peter would enter into. And so it is with us that those seemingly small acts of obedience can lead to great blessings in God.

Did all these acts of obedience prove that Peter would not make any mistakes? If we are obedient to God does that mean we won't still make mistakes from time to time? Peter made mistakes and it is an unfortunate fact that we will make mistakes from time to time. But the rewards that God blesses his obedient children with are not lost because we fail from time to time. Lets look at a few of Peter's mistakes and see how we have made the same ones from time to time.

In Matthew chapter 16 Peter rebuked Christ and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee", speaking of Christ's death. Christ answered Peter and said "Get behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men". Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" **Lesson:** Gods ways are not are ways.

In another place we read where Christ bid Peter to come out of the ship and walk on the boisterous waves. As Peter was walking to him he looked down and as a result he began to sink in the sea. **Lesson:** We should not take our eyes off of Christ. As long as our eyes are on him we are able to keep our troubles under us, but as soon as we look at our troubles and not on him we will begin to sink.

In John chapter 13 we read where Peter did not want Christ to wash his feet. Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet". **Lesson:** It was no doubt very humiliating for Peter to allow Christ to wash his feet. It would be a hard thing for me to let the very Son of God, the creator of the universe to bow down and wash my feet. But humility comes before service. In order to be in service to God in all obedience it takes humility. That is a hard one for us. Most of us don't like to humble ourselves. But this is essential if we are to be obedient to Christ.

As they were coming to take Christ away to Calvary, Peter drew his sword and cut one of the men's ears off. I believe he was trying to take his head off but missed. His anger was a result of them coming to take Christ away. Christ told Peter, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword". **Lesson:** Don't fight God's battles. Even the battles that may come our way from time to time are the Lord's. Romans 12:19 states, "*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*"

Peter denied Christ 3 times. Prior to that Peter said in Matthew 26:35, "*Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*" **Lesson:** Don't ever boast about how strong you are, or what you will do or not do. James 4:13-15 states, "*Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*" We should always be looking to God for help and trusting in him in all that we do.

